



Nebraska Office of Dispute Resolution Collaborative Child Welfare Practices 2009

Types of collaborative practices available through Nebraska's Office of Dispute Resolution– approved mediation centers:

- ☐ **Child welfare mediation:** small, one-to-one private problem solving between family members and providers, or family members themselves
- ☐ **Family Group Conferencing:** New Zealand model for child abuse, neglect, and vulnerable teen cases in which an experienced FGC coordinator works with the child's extended family to plan and prepare for a family group conference in which the family members deliberate in private family time to create a family plan for the safety, welfare, and permanency of the child at risk. This family-centered approach may be used at any stage of the child welfare process. Family connections, family decision-making are key elements.
- ☐ **Expedited FGC:** A family group conference specially created for use in Nebraska cases at the initial removal stage of the process.
- ☐ **Facilitated meeting:** the use of a neutral, knowledgeable facilitator to assist professionals, family members, and others in a child welfare discussion.
- ☐ **Pre-hearing facilitation:** the use of neutral, knowledgeable facilitators to assist in facilitating a brief information gathering or decision-making conference prior to the initial removal hearing, or subsequent juvenile court hearings.

Collaborative child welfare practices are court-connected approaches that can be used throughout the child welfare case:

- ⇒ Immediately upon removal
- ⇒ Pre-adjudication
- ⇒ Pre-disposition
- ⇒ 12-month review hearing
- ⇒ Pre-termination
- ⇒ Other key decision-making points

Collaborative practices are those in which:

- ✓ Family members are empowered to make decisions
- ✓ Children's voices are at the center of the process
- ✓ Relationships among family members and friends are strengthened
- ✓ Cases reach permanency more quickly when mediated
- ✓ Specially trained and experienced independent facilitator or mediator convenes and facilitates dialogue

Research* shows that:

- ✓ Children achieve permanency more quickly in mediation or collaborative intervention than in non-mediated cases
- ✓ Reduction of re-abuse rates for children occurs more often in FGC cases than non-FGC
- ✓ Increase of using extended family members care for children at risk in FGC cases
- ✓ Reduction in the number of multiple placements – FGC plans create stability for children

**American Humane Association, www.fgdm.org*

Nebraska Office of Dispute Resolution and its ODR-approved mediation centers are affiliated with:

Nebraska Center on Children, Families and the Courts
Nebraska Through the Eyes of the Child Initiative
American Humane Association Family Group Decision-Making Program
National Child Welfare Collaborative Decision-Making Network
Association of Family and Conciliation Courts